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ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT INTERPRETATION OF AENEID 4

Every careful student of the Aeneid always has been, and every such student always will be, profoundly interested in the fourth book of the poem. In THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 8.169-170 I gave a list of papers, published not long before that time, in America, in which this book had been very carefully discussed. In a review of a recent School edition of Aeneid 4, printed elsewhere in this issue, I quoted an attempt by an English scholar, Mr. Freeman, at interpretation of the book. The matter is so interesting and so important that I quote here in extenso a note on Aeneid 4.393 at *pius Aeneas*. . . , published in The Classical Quarterly 12.146-147 (July and October, 1918), by an English scholar, Mr. Gilbert Norwood, in an article entitled *Vergiliana* (12.141-150):

Aeneas' treatment of Dido has been endlessly discussed, but I believe that something remains to be said concerning Vergil's conception of his hero's situation and conduct. About Dido we are all agreed, and I have no wish to comment further on that magnificent picture. But the Trojan's weakness, treachery, and futility—what of these? Everyone detests him, if only for a moment. Henry, for instance, writes of "the heartless, cold-blooded seduction of Dido by the hero of the Aeneid". Why has Vergil elaborately defamed the figure which dominates his epic?

In a sense, there is no problem at all. To speak bluntly, the poet's basic conception of the plot in this book is quite simple, quite admirable, quite in accord with his whole design. Throughout the first half of the Aeneid <Aeneas> is shown pressing on through blunders, distractions, dangers, ceaselessly to Latium. At Carthage he finds his mightiest obstacle. To the Trojan Africa offers with one hand love, with the other a city already building. He is shown baffled and sorely tested by a supreme emotional temptation over which he triumphs at last. He suffers, but—there is the vital fact—none of his actions are his own. He, like Dido, is the tool of Heaven. At every point it is a god which rules the action. Juno, by the aid of Venus, forces Dido to love the stranger. During the storm which spoils the hunting party she forces Aeneas to become the Queen's lover. Mercury, at Jupiter's bidding, forces Aeneas to desert Dido. He *cannot* stay because he must hearken to the commands of Heaven: 'Italiam non sponte sequor' (v. 361). No blame whatever attaches to Aeneas. Such, as I said, is the poet's basic conception—terrible, noble, and consistent with the spirit of the whole Aeneid.

My reader is of course dissatisfied. But why? Because, as a fact, the basic conception has been badly carried out. Vergil's performance is pulled awry by two potent forces which reveal themselves as the action proceeds.

The first is his interest in Dido. She has grown on his hands far beyond the slight secondary figure he at first meditated—an earlier Lavinia—and engages our attention much more deeply than her lover. The case is precisely the same as in The Merchant of Venice. Our sympathies go all awry because in Shakespeare's despite (as it might seem) Shylock grows from the sordid scoundrel he first projected to a dominant and formidable stature: the end of the trial-scene is detestable, exactly as the close of Aeneas' final interview with Dido is detestable. So deeply do we care for the Queen that her sufferings, whatever justification the Trojan

may claim, appear to wreck his credit forever. We are deaf to the magnificent pathos of his own heartbreak <441-449>. Probably not one reader in twenty remembers these superb lines, because his ears are filled with—
saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset
ante fugam suboles, si quis mihi parvulus aula
luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret,
non equidem omnino capta ac deserta viderer.

(vv. 327 sqq.)

Yet Vergil could feel for both, if we cannot.

The second reason is less obvious, but of still greater importance. We are not satisfied with Book IV. as a whole, simply because we do not believe in the gods. When we are not listening to Dido, we are thinking of Aeneas: at Jupiter, Juno, Venus, and Mercury we glance dourly over our shoulder when they speak, and forget them utterly when their words are ended. But they rule the action! Could we realize their existence and power as vividly as Dido's love and despair, our verdict on the poem would be altered completely. And here lies Vergil's vast failure—his one vast failure in this Book; he has not succeeded in making us believe as we read that Juno and the rest are even more real than Dido—and no less than that (one writes it with all respect) it was his plain business to do. We do not believe in Zeus and the inspiration of the Delphic oracle, but while reading the Choephoroe we experience all the emotions which Aeschylus intended to arouse, not simply a horror of matricide. The weakness, then, of this Fourth Book is certainly not that Aeneas acts shamefully, but that Vergil, having pinned his every chance of success to our belief in the gods, has failed to produce that belief in us effectively.

C. K.

REVIEWS

- Titii Livi Ab Urbe Condita Liber I. Edited with Introduction, Notes, Index of Proper Names, and Vocabulary, by C. E. Freeman. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press (1917). Pp. 198. 70 cents.
- Selections from Ovid. Edited with Introduction, Notes, Index of Proper Names, and Vocabulary, by C. E. Freeman. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press (1917). Pp. 128. 70 cents.
- Virgil: Aeneid IV. Edited with Introduction, Notes, Index of Proper Names, and Vocabulary, by C. E. Freeman. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press (1917). Pp. 107. 70 cents.
- Virgil: Aeneid VI. Edited with Introduction, Notes, Index of Proper Names, and Vocabulary, by C. E. Freeman. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press (1918). Pp. 160. 70 cents.
- M. Tulli Ciceronis Pro Lege Manilia Sive De Imperio Cn. Pompei Oratio. Edited with Introduction, Notes, Index of Proper Names, and Vocabulary, by John R. King. Oxford: at the Clarendon Press (1917). Pp. xii+53.
- The Essentials of Latin Syntax. An Outline of the Ordinary Prose Constructions, Together with Exercises in Composition Based on Caesar and Livy. By Charles Christopher Mierow. Revised Edition, With Vocabulary. Boston: Ginn and Company (1917). Pp. x+186. \$1.20.

¹Even her suicide cannot be completed without the intervention of Iris.

Mr. C. E. Freeman, Sometime Assistant Master at Westminster, is General Editor of a new series, entitled the Oxford Junior Latin Series. Four of the booklets in the Series have come to hand.

In the edition of Livy, the Introduction (7-15) deals with the life of Livy and with his History. No authorities are cited for the statements made about Livy's life. This statement holds true with respect to the like parts of the other books by Mr. Freeman here considered; the books are meant for those who are reading Livy, Ovid, or Vergil for the first time, or have little knowledge of any of these authors. But even in books intended for such readers it would pay to give some hint of the sources on which the editor draws for his information; some really inquiring mind may address itself to this particular book. By such a mind, and by teachers who may use the book, an indication of the nature of the available sources would be welcomed.

One statement about Livy made by Mr. Freeman (8) seems rather carelessly expressed:

Two years later, as a symbol of the peace thus secured, <Augustus> closed the temple of Janus. After this date, 29 B.C., and before 25 B.C. Livy began the History, as we gather from his own statement.

I do not know what passage Mr. Freeman can have had in mind here, unless it be Livy 1.19.3. There Livy mentions the second and the third occasions on which the Temple of Janus was closed. Since the Temple was closed for the third time in 29 B.C., and the fourth occasion on which it was closed came in 25 B.C., it is usually inferred that Book I was *published* between 29 and 25, perhaps about 27. It might, of course, have been *begun* long years before. In his commentary on 1.19 Mr. Freeman says nothing at all concerning the bearing of that chapter on the chronology of Livy's work.

The notes in this book (102-148) are good as far as they go. I am convinced that Livy requires—or at least invites—more annotations than Mr. Freeman supplies. In the Vocabulary not many meanings are given; now and again syntactical remarks are included.

The Introduction to the edition of Ovid deals with the Life and Writings of Ovid (7-16), and The Metres (16-20). On pages 21-60, 45 Selections, amounting in all to 1025 verses (numbered consecutively), are given. There is nothing in the book to show from what parts of Ovid these Selections were taken. Some pieces are from the Heroides, some from the Fasti, some from the Tristia. The last 200 lines, more or less, come from the Metamorphoses, and include parts of the account of the flood and parts of the Pyramus and Thisbe story.

The Introduction to the edition of Aeneid IV deals with the Life <and Works> of Virgil (5-8); the Fall of Troy and the Wanderings of Aeneas (8-11); The Aeneid and the Character of Aeneas (12-16); The Metre of the Aeneid (16-21). The Introduction is good reading, and worth while, so far as it goes. The character of Aeneas as revealed in Book 4 is discussed

in interesting fashion, as may be seen from the following quotation (16):

. . . It might seem that Virgil had done all that he could to exalt Dido in our estimation and to lower Aeneas.

It is needless to say that Virgil did not deliberately aim at this result; he merely accepted it with indifference. He wished to surround the fate of Dido with all the pathetic interest that undeserved suffering could give to it, and he was not much concerned if the character of his hero suffered in consequence. In this he was quite consistent, because Aeneas is not in truth a hero of romance or even a saint, but a man with a great mission, which it is impious to hinder. Judged thus, Dido is the temptress from whose snares he must be freed, and when he escapes them, we should rejoice even more than when Ulysses, to face hardship and peril, leaves behind the luxurious bondage of Calypso's island. For the future of the world is at stake, and no thought of peace or love or honour itself may weight the scale against the inheritance of a boundless destiny.

In the edition of Aeneid VI, pages 7-12 of the Introduction, dealing with the Life of Vergil, and with the Fall of Troy and the Wanderings of Aeneas, are nearly identical with the opening pages of Mr. Freeman's edition of Aeneid IV. Next comes The Descent of Aeneas to Hades (12-21), an interesting discussion of the contents of Book 6. On pp. 21-27 there is a discussion of "The Journey of Ulysses to the Land of the Dead. Odyssey, x. 467-574, xi". Pages 27-30 deal with The Golden Bough, 30-34 with The Metre of the Aeneid.

The notes in these editions of parts of the Aeneid are fuller than those in the other two books and are distinctly helpful. The books, at once handy and attractive, can easily be carried about by teacher or pupil, for reading and rereading at odd moments.

Mr. King gives the text of Professor A. C. Clark (Oxford Classical Text Series); Mr. Clark has also revised the Notes, especially such of them as relate to points of textual criticism. The Introduction is very brief (pp. v-xi). In accordance with the absurd practice of the Oxford Classical Text Series the pages of the text are not numbered. The Notes (pages 1-32) will be found serviceable, but they are not as good or as helpful as those in the edition of the Manilian Law by A. S. Wilkins (London, Macmillan and Co., 1891. Pp. liii+76).

Of the original edition of Dr. Mierow's book a favorable account was given in THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 4.221-223, by Dr. William F. Tibbetts. The present edition has been enlarged, according to the Preface (v) by "the inclusion of eight sets of new exercises (replacing the original two sets), four based upon Caesar's Gallic War and four upon Livy . . .". The book thus supplies material for four years' work in Latin composition. Further, at the request of the publishers, the author has added a complete English-Latin vocabulary, "so that the book is now further available for grammatical review and practice in composition in schools and colleges where the Gallic War and Livy's history are not read".

C. K.